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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE, AND EUR/SSA, NSC FOR BRAUN,
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/16/2016

TAGS: MARR PREL PGOV UNMIK YI

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: KFOR RE-ESTABLISHES PERMANENT PRESENCE
NORTH OF THE IBAR RIVER

Classified By: CDA KIRK MCBRIDE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 13 the French contingent in charge of Multi-National Task Force-North (MNTF-N) reactivated a former Belgian KFOR camp in the northern Kosovo municipality of Leposavic. The camp will be manned by different national contingents on two-week rotations, beginning with the French.

Responsibility for overall control and oversight for the base remains with the French, who are in charge of KFOR's northern sector, although each contingent will be responsible for sustaining its own TDY troops. The French commander reported to COMKFOR local reluctance regarding the stationing of U.S. troops in the north. The earliest U.S. troops from Camp Bondsteel could be stationed there is late-July. KFOR has not yet given clear instructions about the mission of troops stationed at the re-opened base. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In response to ongoing concerns about the removal of the last fixed KFOR point north of the Ibar River, KFOR has reopened a former Belgian base in the northern, Serb-majority municipality of Leposavic. USKFOR's Deputy Commander for Civil Military Operations (DC-CMO) told USOP on June 15 that the French contingent in MNTF-N took possession of the camp on June 13. USKFOR's Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) contractors completed work to reopen the camp using KFOR funding and it has been affectionately named "Nothing Hill," descriptive of the area's desolation. It is located approximately 400 meters off the main north-south highway through the northern municipalities connecting Kosovo with Serbia and is designed to house one company (roughly 100 soldiers) although it has capacity to accommodate an additional company, if ever needed. It will be manned by different national KFOR constituent forces on two-week rotations. According to Camp Bondsteel's DC-CMO, U.S. troops are scheduled there for two weeks in late July. Responsibility for overall control and oversight will be in the hands of the French who are in charge of Kosovo's northern sector, although each contingent will be responsible for sustaining its own TDY troops.

¶3. (C) Regional UNCIVPOL Commander Gary Smith told E/P Chief and PolOff on June 15 that some local Serbs in Leposavic see the reopening of the camp as an employment opportunity, while northern leaders complain that the international community is trying to surround and control them. According to USKFOR's

DC-CMO, local Serbs complained when KBR brought ethnic Albanians in to re-open the camp. She also said that the French commander of MNTF-N expressed concern from the local population about the stationing of U.S. troops in his sector in a video tele-conference with COMKFOR.

¶4. (C) The DC-CMO noted that neither NATO nor KFOR have given any clear instructions as to the mission (deterrence or outreach) of troops stationed at the camp. She noted that, in general, the U.S. contingent in Kosovo does more civil-military operations than others stationed here, and much more than the French, who prefer more traditionally static operations. She hoped that tactical orders for the mission will be given before U.S. troops are stationed there.

¶5. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable for release in its entirety to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.

MCBRIDE